

NORTHWEST TEMPE COMMUNITY PLAN

FOCUS GROUP – Tuesday March 8, 2005

Westside Multigenerational Building; 715 W. 5th Street; Tempe
Meeting Summary Notes

Meeting Participants: Raquel Gutierrez
Michelle Harman-Hirsch
Edward O. Wong
Jim Malicki
Jenny Lucier
Allen Skinner
Gloria Regensberg
Margaret Stout
Celine Tehide
John Schulte
Eduarda Yates
Jacqueline Thompson
Bill Butler
Tom Soffel, Sr.
John Minett
Todd Green

The following meeting notes are intended to be a summary of the discussions at the meeting.

Peggy Fiandaca, President of Partners for Strategic Action, Inc. explained that she was hired by the City of Tempe to work with the neighborhood to complete the Northwest Tempe Community Plan. She thanked everyone for taking time to come to this meeting to discuss issues, concerns, and ideas to improve the neighborhood. She asked how many people attending had been involved in past planning efforts. The majority of people raised their hands. However, there were several residents that were new to the neighborhood planning process. Therefore, Peggy gave a broad overview of past planning efforts and explained the purpose of the community plan.

Peggy explained the difference between the various types of plans that can pertain to neighborhoods and the relationship to the Tempe General Plan 2030. She also described the anticipated schedule for completion of the Northwest Tempe Community Plan.

Peggy explained that the purpose of the focus group is to understand neighborhood issues, concerns, and potential ideas for improvement to

the neighborhood. Particularly, the focus group is intended to communicate those issues that should be addressed in the draft plan. Following is a summary of the focus group discussions.

A. INTRODUCTIONS

All participants were asked to identify what they like about the neighborhood and what things they would like to see changed.

THINGS I LIKE ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD	THINGS I WOULD CHANGE ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD
Socio-economic and racial diversity	City's interaction with traditionally non-representative participants (e.g., immigrant mothers, youth, mono-lingual speakers, and elderly) – Need more of their input – more regional outreach
Quiet street, good neighbors	Grocery store
Multigenerational center	A completed plan
Single and employed seem to be the target for the area – movement toward big city	Transportation – bus pullover lanes; left-turn lanes; mobility issues particularly during functions (e.g., the Centerpoint project should have had a bus pullout
The Linden neighborhood is neat; I am one of the 3 original homeowners still on block. The area has lasted well as long as it has.	The change has impacted on people of my age in the area; there needs to better support to existing residents
The neighborhood is walkable to downtown and other places. The river bike path that goes up to Shea Blvd. is great and I use all the time	ASU students – 6 or 7 living in one house
I like the City and that it still feels like a neighborhood	Linden Park lost full-time residents and too many rentals.
Liberal community – more like a “community than other metro areas – I like that it is a college town	Too many drinking festivals (e.g., the use of Tempe Lake as a beer festival) and the impact on the neighborhood

Near everything – ASU, downtown, airport.	Safety – drug activity that is ignored that impacts property values.
City listened to the “teenager” and made some improvements in the area.	Older housing stock improved and renovated; Strategic redevelopment should be done and not huge swaths of land/homes redeveloped.
Like the residential feel and should not be pressured toward density. Don’t want activities to encroach into neighborhood.	Preserve neighborhood so people don’t feel they are pushed out.
Nice feel. Closeness to downtown. Park area closeness. Close to activities in downtown. Property values rising.	Don’t suggest xeriscape in flood irrigation area.
	Airport noise – noise zone areas don’t cover some of the neighborhood.
	Citywide 51% of homes are rental properties. Overall in this neighborhood the percentage is higher.
	Tall buildings are replacing lower-height buildings. Developers are tearing down lower buildings.
	What’s up with the towers! They do not belong!
	Who’s determining the neighborhood vision? It seems like the developers and not residents

B. ISSUES THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED

The participants identified those issues that must be addressed in the development of the Northwest Tempe Community Plan. The group brainstormed a list. The exercise was not intended to reach any consensus on issues but to identify a comprehensive list of issues.

What are the important things that the Northwest Tempe Community Plan must address?

Neighborhood Understanding

- Important to understand the neighborhood; there needs to be in-depth research
- Understand the shades of economics, socio-economic, cultural heritage, etc. within the neighborhood
- Relate this information to historic preservation so that it reflects the heritage and culture of the neighborhood
- Consider more buildings and a district for the National Register
- There is encroachment on the edges of the area; the neighborhood needs to be protected from encroachment

Design

- Design consistency; blending of the environmental with design
- Consider trees mixing with the zeriscape landscaping
- Examine ways to be "Creatively Green"
- Promote green building design that assists with the affordable issue
- Consistency in street lighting design throughout the neighborhood
- Don't want everything to look alike
- No neon
- Blending of color; compatible color of buildings
- The Arbors (good example of updated color)
- Design should match or be compatible with the surrounding environment
- Against design review regulations because it increases cost of housing
- Extreme architectural review (e.g., color and materials regulations) might be negative but there needs to be some guidelines
- Want flexibility in design
- Concerned about the barrier to affordable housing that design regulations might cause
- Input by residents into the design process is important; the timeframe might be an issue; the Pulte project is a good example of neighborhood communications; as a result of neighborhood input early in the process the project went from 12 to 3.5 stories
- Provide more shade
- Need to remain focused on the "Big Picture" of how the neighborhood develops and not building by building only
- Pick battles carefully
- Ensure process is respected
- How do we align everyone with the vision – if there is a vision

- The neighborhood is under a lot of development pressure – we need to do things differently here (Northwest Tempe Neighborhood)
- Concerned that there was not much done with past work; it is a reflection of how the City has handled this neighborhood
- A lot said today is already in the plan
- How do we educate people of the “possible” and capitalize on this
- Compatible design – Interaction with residents to ensure consistent throughout whole process

Transportation

- Transit is important; the neighborhood circular should run later at night
- Neighborhood circular within this neighborhood is good
- Need better linkages to other areas within Tempe and connections to other areas throughout the valley
- There is a timing problem with the 5th and Priest light making it tough to get out of neighborhood
- Parking at Beck and University – abundance of street parking (design issue)
- Roosevelt and University traffic signal – need to be able to cross to get to this facility
- More sheltered bus stops
- Need better connections to get across the railroad tracks – need another crossing down University
- As development occurs along Rio Salado, it is important to maintain public pedestrian access to river (e.g., the Pulte project is a good example)
- Bike paths – more, safe, continuous, and consider a rails to trails project
- More street lighting in appropriate areas; purpose is to provide light for pedestrians
- Redesign of University Drive – implement it!
- Traffic calming should be considered to slow traffic through residential areas
- Tempe residents should be able to park for free (via a sticker) in downtown; I have to compete for parking with people visiting the downtown area while I just want to go to the post office

Economic Development

- Need more basic goods and services such as a grocery store should be developed
- Need to assist and support area small business
- Market University Drive as a “whole” area like a Main Street area

- Jobs are important to create in the neighborhood
- Mixed use development with offices is okay in the area if it is strategically located and well-planned within the neighborhood
- Provide a balance between density and economics; there needs to be compromise
- Unfinished projects in the neighborhood causes blight (e.g., Beck and University and MCW on Roosevelt)
- Small-scale development (i.e., Mom and Pop businesses) is preferred
- University Drive should not have any more restaurant chains
- University Drive is the neighborhood's "Main Street" and should be treated as such. It is the entryway to Tempe from Phoenix. There is an opportunity to create an "Urban/Village" type of character. Basic goods/services should be provided

Historic Preservation

- Historic Preservation should be encouraged
- University to Broadway – neighborhood is in transition; there is a lot of diverse architecture
- College to Priest – strong guidelines must be kept

Incentives/Disincentives

- Provide incentives for first time home buyers to assist them in purchasing homes in the area
- Consider some type of regulation that would require more long-term living in the neighborhood (through covenants)
- Disincentives for rentals – models of rentals that do a good job
- Provide disincentives for investors targeting students to protect the ability for families to stay in the area
- Make it more expensive for rental investors to do business
- There needs to be a balance between good investors; maybe those that have been here awhile

Open Space and Landscaping

- Preserve the park
- Get rid of the police property yard
- Extend hours of the swimming pool
- Crossing over Priest is a concern
- Within walking distance, you can get to a park
- University Drive is a bad area to walk
- Walkability is important – more pedestrian design (5th Street is a good example)
- Landscape conversion; there should be different options between flood irrigation areas, etc.

- Landscaping along streets – trees along sidewalks

Affordable housing

- The amount of and regulation of rental property; they are unkempt
- How to protect the affordable housing – there is an opportunity to implement economic development strategies such as equity investment, land trust; New Town's CDFI – loan funds, land trusts that can leverage dollars by the private sector
- Diversity of housing stock – preserving diversity of neighborhood – type of housing
- Define "Affordable" as median income family and low income is the same as Section 8 requirements
- It has always been a family-oriented neighborhood but now families can't afford rents
- Rental homes for students are pushing out the ability of families to be able to stay or move here; families are outbid by investors for housing

Rental Properties

- Stricter code enforcement of rental properties
- Inclusionary zoning
- Require a set aside of affordable housing units in projects
- Conversion of housing to condos with reasonable HOA restrictions

Riverside is At Risk

- There are patchy lots
- A lot of the land has already been assembled by developers
- There has been a loss of historic properties
- Many homes are dilapidated
- There has been a lot of "neighborhood fabric" lost already
- There should be redevelopment plans in areas that are at risk; the City must recognize these at-risk areas and put plans in place and enforce the plans

C. Next Steps

Peggy thanked everyone for attending. She said that meeting summary notes will be completed and included on the website. Everyone will be invited to attend a town hall meeting after the DRAFT Plan is completed. The purpose of the town hall will be review the DRAFT Plan. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

City Staff Present: Jeff Kuluga, Tempe City of Tempe Community Relations

Consultant Present: Peggy Fiandaca, Partners for Strategic Action, Inc.

**NORTHWEST TEMPE COMMUNITY PLAN
FOCUS GROUP PROCESS 2005
SUMMARY OF MEETING QUESTIONNAIRE**

Participants were asked to complete the following questionnaire and turn it in before they left. Following is a summary of the responses.

10 questionnaires were received; 16 people attended (excluding staff). The following indicate how many people rated the following.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Group Size		2	4	3
Meeting Facilities		1	4	4
Length of Focus Group			6	2
Facilitator			3	6

What did you like most about the Northwest Tempe Community Plan Focus Group process?

Great discussion about pros and cons for development
Hearing from other neighbors
Thanks for trying to keep us on task and listening to our feedback on process
That there was one
I like how almost everybody participated and had a say on what we were talking about. I liked how everybody was well listened to.
People were very civil and tolerant – nice!
Great interaction between “everyone” that was present.
Everything
Everyone could participate in the discussion
There was participation by many and very thoughtful comments made

Is there anything that you would have done differently during the Focus Group process?

No (3 people)
Start with at least a basic plan/outline as most of us don’t know where to start; participants speak without basis of fact
Hopefully, the city will send out minutes of what was said tonight
More about prior plans
I would have said more

Should the process continue to be used to educate citizens and receive input from the community?

Yes (6 people).
Yes. This is a great thing to be doing, if we don’t have a good idea of what is going on, we can’t do anything!

Yes. We are busy Tempe citizens need to continue gathering input from us.

Yes. People need to be informed.

What was the most important topic you heard today that the Northwest Tempe Community Plan should address?

People who live here want to preserve the diversity and unique character of this area and they don't want to be pushed out by over development
Rentals (I'm a resident and landlord) – all aspects including enforcement and good models

Airport noise

Economic development – grocery store that you can walk to; basic goods and services; support small businesses and jobs; University Drive as “our” Main Street

Airplane noise

Address the transportation and parking as we get more population

They're all important – it's the synergy of them that is more important

I believe that the issue of all of the new buildings replacing old, important city buildings is very important

Economic development and housing diversity

University Drive is our Main Street

Intelligent discussion about development